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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2567

July 17, 1992

FARM VALUES -- The per acre value of U.S. farm real estate is expected to average unchanged to 2 percent higher this year. Underlying the forecast are expectations that net farm income, interest rates on farm real estate loans and inflation will be lower in 1992. On Jan. 1, 1992, the value of U.S. farm real estate averaged \$685 per acre, which is 17 percent below the record \$823 ten years ago. USDA economists say that although most investors in farm real estate attempt long-term assessments of future economic conditions, several key indicators in 1991 did not support higher farm real estate values. Contact: Roger Hexem (202) 219-0423.

MIRACLE MOSS -- A moss found throughout the United States may hold a gene that will give drought tolerance a new meaning for U.S. crops. Mel Oliver, a molecular biologist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service, collects the lowly star moss from mountainous U.S. regions. As soon as a few drops of water are poured on the dry moss, what once seemed a brown Brillo pad becomes a lush green mass of individual branches with starlike needles. "We're talking about using genetic engineering to create a grass that can approach the capability of the star moss to completely dry up, turn brown and recover quickly when it rains," Oliver says. Contact: Mel Oliver (806) 746-5353.

ALMOND CROP UP -- Good news for almond lovers. The 1992 almond production in California will be up 12 percent from last year. USDA economists say the forecast of 550 million pounds of shelled almonds is based on an estimated bearing acreage of 380,000 acres. The almond crop appears to be in good condition and is about two weeks ahead of last year. Overall nut set is higher than last year. Contact: Kevin Hintzman (202) 720-5412.

AFLATOXIN RESISTANCE -- An ear of corn picked from a south Georgia field in 1980 has yielded a new source of aflatoxin resistance -- a discovery that eventually should bode well for corn producers. Corn grown from the 1980 kernels had 60 percent less aflatoxin than susceptible kernels during more than ten years of tests, says Neil W. Widstrom, a plant geneticist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service. "This is a significant reduction in aflatoxin," says Widstrom. "It will provide corn breeders with an excellent source of germplasm for breeding aflatoxin resistance into future hybrids." Contact: Neil A. Widstrom (912) 397-2341.

CHECK YOUR LABEL -- We are constantly updating our mailing lists. If your mailing label needs correcting, please contact: Marci Hilt (202) 720-6445.



EATING TO STAY FIT -- "Senior citizens," "elderly," "older adults" -- no matter what we choose to call our years past middle-age, they signal changes that we all have to face. "We'll probably find that gaining weight is easier since basal metabolic rate slows and energy needs decrease," says **Beth Reames**, an Extension Service nutritionist with the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center. "The body's immune system also weakens, so infections occur more often." As people grow older, Reames says, good eating habits can help make the years ahead healthier and happier. **Contact: Beth Reames (504) 388-4141.**

FARM LABOR UP -- During the week of June 7 - 13, there were 575,000 hired workers on farms and ranches in the 11 surveyed states -- New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Florida, Michigan, Wisconsin, Texas, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington and California. A year ago there were 566,000 workers. Average June wage rates ranged from \$4.75 per hour in Wisconsin to \$6.54 per hour in Oregon. Wages were higher when compared with last year except in Texas, Washington and Wisconsin. **Contact: Tom Kurtz (202) 690-3288.**

USDA PROJECTS HELP NATIVE AMERICANS -- On the Fort Hall Reservation in southeastern Idaho, Native American children are learning new skills, developing healthy attitudes about life and having fun doing it. Their teachers aren't Ph.D.'s, but teenaged mentors -- community role models. These teens are participating in a USDA Extension Service youth project designed to encourage community well-being. The Fort Hall project is but one of 28 Indian Reservation Projects funded by USDA's Extension Service and currently operating in 21 states. The projects provide education and technical assistance focusing on agriculture, horticulture, 4-H and youth leadership, health and nutrition. **Contact: Charles Morgan (202) 690-3656.**

WINTER WHEAT CROP UP -- USDA economists forecast the winter wheat production at 1.57 billion bushels, up 15 percent from last year. Overall, the average yield should be 37.0 bushels per acre, up from 34.8 bushels per acre in 1991. **Contact: Vaughn Siegenthaler (202) 720-8068.**

LEANER BEEF can result from increasing the amount of time that it takes for cattle to reach slaughter weight. USDA researchers fed identical diets to cattle of the same genetic type, but geared the diets so that the cattle would reach a designated carcass weight at different ages. The result: 22 percent of the variation in fatness was associated with number of days on feed. **Contact: John W. Keele (402) 762-4251.**

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FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1832 -- On this edition of **Agriculture USA**, **Gary Crawford** interviews two most unusual professional cooks -- a former executive chef at the White House and a chuckwagon cook. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1314 -- Farming a few acres; watermelon on the comeback trail; "Flvr Savr" tomatoes; turkey burgers; JOLT. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1823 -- USDA News Highlights; Wetlands reserve; global warming update; all the news that's fit to eat; regulating genetically engineered plants. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1529 -- Calcium and the firm apple; blood clots and fish oil; clotting test; sterile corn earworms; potential integrated pest management tool. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Fri., July 24, livestock/poultry update, cattle on feed; Tues., July 28, crop/weather update; Thurs., July 30, catfish production, farm numbers, world tobacco situation; Fri., July 31, ag prices. (These are the **USDA** reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.)

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

FEATURES -- **Debbie Janifer** reports on this year's watermelon feast; **Pat O'Leary** reports on the National Agricultural Library's efforts to preserve its old books and manuscripts; and **Dave Luciani** reports on watering and fertilizing techniques for home lawns.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chairman of the World Board **James Donald** on the latest supply and demand figures and USDA chief meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on the latest weather and crop developments.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **Debbie Janifer** reports on the sugar and sweetener outlook; **Pat O'Leary** reports on a secrets of soil and earthworms; and **Lynn Wyvill** reports on a volunteer program of master gardens.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- **Agriculture Update**, five minutes of USDA farm program information in "news desk" format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

85 FOREIGN AG REPRESENTATIVES...have been invited to the Washington State Agriculture Showcase, Aug. 19-21, in Yakima, says **Gary Claus** (Northwest Ag News Network, Newberg, Ore.). The reps will see the exhibits of an expected 130 businesses and organizations, and will be taken on a tour of several agricultural regions in the state. Gary says the three-week early arrival of the growing season this year had an effect on the berry harvest. The crop ripened before harvest crews arrived, lowering production.

ADJUSTMENT...in the Northeast dairy industry is still underway. **Bob Flint** (WCFR, Springfield, Vt.) says the local milk processing plant has been absorbed by a larger firm and closed -- 150 people lost their jobs. Another important issue Bob is covering is property rights. The state is implementing planning on a local and regional basis. Many property owners tell him they feel the plans offer no compensation while reducing their rights to use the land.

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FIVE DAYS...of special reports were aired by **Joe Karvis** (WCVL, Crawfordsville, Ind.) following the damaging frost of June 22. Joe says about 12,000 acres of corn were killed in the state. He says the damage was unusual in that it was so spotty. Portions of some fields have turned brown, while the remainder was untouched.

COVERAGE...of the ethanol rally, July 6 in Peoria, Ill., was broadcast live, says **Colleen Callahan** (WMBD, Peoria). More than 2,000 people attended. Colleen broadcast her noon show from the rally site. The rally sought a positive ruling from EPA on ethanol. On Aug. 19, Peoria plans to introduce 14 new busses to the city's transportation system --All will be powered entirely by ethanol.

CONGRATULATIONS...to **Tyson Gair** and the TV news service crew at Mississippi State University. They won first place in the TV news category in a statewide college competition for their story about transgenic cotton research.

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio and TV Division